

GROW (part 4)

Adulthood

11.18.2018

Review

Ephesians 4:12-13 (NLT)

Their (the ministry offices') responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ. (13) This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ.

We've been talking about what spiritual growth looks like, and have looked at the parallel between physical growth and spiritual growth.

In this series we are looking at the babyhood, childhood, and adult stages of growth.

(October 14)

Anything healthy is growing and changing. Growth means change. If you're not changing, you're not growing.

(October 21)

Four characteristics of spiritual babies:

1. Babies need a lot of help.
2. Babies are innocent. They have no past.
3. Babies are hungry and curious.
4. Babies are self-centered.

(November 11)

4 characteristics of spiritual children:

1. Distraction
2. Talkativeness
3. Need for recognition
4. Self-will

There is no growth without change, no change without pain, so therefore there is no growth without pain. - Sam Chand

Are you interested enough in personal growth that you're willing to face the pain that changing produces?

Today - Spiritual Adulthood

1 Corinthians 2:6 (NKJV)

However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing.

5 characteristics of spiritual adults:

1. Natural things take second place to spiritual things.

Hebrews 11:24-26 (NLT)

It was by faith that Moses, when he grew up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. (25) He chose to share the oppression of God's people instead of enjoying the fleeting pleasures of sin. (26) He thought it was better to suffer for the sake of Christ than to own the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking ahead to his great reward.

If you regularly put spiritual things second...challenge yourself...where is your spiritual life?

If you are too sporadic in church involvement, small group involvement, volunteering to help others in outreaches or dream team help - because you are constantly out of town chillin' - it will affect your spiritual life... your spiritual growth will decrease!

There is nothing wrong with taking an occasional rest, but too much will hinder you spiritually!

If you spend MORE time watching Netflix, or looking at Facebook or other online social apps, then you are most probably suffering for it spiritually.

Men, if you spend more time hunting, fishing, working out, playing video games than with God, then you are most probably suffering spiritually.

Local church involvement can be a good gauge of your spiritual well being.

My life has become more refined year after year. Years ago, I could spend time doing so many things that now I choose not to because I need/want the time with God.

Hebrews 5:11-14 (NLT)

There is much more we would like to say about this, but it is difficult to explain, especially since you are spiritually dull and don't seem to listen. (12) You have been believers so long now that you ought to be teaching others. Instead, you need someone to teach you again the basic things about God's word. You are like babies who need milk and cannot eat solid food. (13) For someone who lives on milk is still an infant and doesn't know how to do what is right.

(14) Solid food is for those who are mature, who through training have the skill to recognize the difference between right and wrong.

2. Unaffected by criticism or compliments

Back in the early 1980's I wrote a quote in the front of my Bible I got from Jerry Savelle as I attended a leadership conference:

Don't be moved by the cheers nor the jeers...

Humility reigns!

Someone has said that true humility is forgetfulness of self. You simply don't put you in the equation as you think of God and others. That is how Jesus lived. That is how Paul learned to live.

Philippians 1:21-24 (NKJV)

For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. 22 But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. 23 For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. 24 Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you.

Galatians 2:20 (NLT)

My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Acts 20:24 (NKJV)

But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

Now this one really hits home with me. My circumstances as a child produced an acute reaction to criticism when I became an adult. I was made fun of, pushed aside, and devalued by friends as a child, and also devalued myself due to my hair and my clothes. I did not value me. Others I felt did not value me. So, I assumed an attitude of rejection.

This was a big root in my personality, and it took a lot of effort to challenge it and change it.

Other people find themselves on the opposite end, boasting of their pedigree (family), money, abilities, skills, and it equally hinders them in their spiritual life.

1 Corinthians 4:3-4 (Phillips)

But, as a matter of fact, it matters very little to me what you, or any man, thinks of me—I don't even value my opinion of myself—but that doesn't justify me before God. My only true judge is God himself.

Kenneth Hagin quote:

Paul did not get in bondage to anybody. It was not a carnal independence—but a saintly dignity. The law of love governed him. He was not easily puffed up, nor was he touchy or resentful. His spirit—where the love of God was shed abroad—dominated him. Immature Christians will feel slighted or puffed up. If they are criticized—or even imagine that they are—they are restless, uneasy, and full of self-pity. On the other hand, if they are noticed and appreciated, they feel lifted up and full of self-importance.

Hagin, Kenneth E. Growing Up Spiritually (Kindle Locations 473-478). Faith Library Publications. Kindle Edition.

3. Ability to see God in every life event

Genesis 45:4-8 (NKJV)

I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt. (5) But now, do not therefore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life. (6) For these two years the famine has been in the land, and there are still five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvesting. (7) And God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. (8) So now it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.

Notice how God dealt with Israel in a similar way that an eagle deals with its young:

Exodus 19:4

You have seen what I did to the Egyptians and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself.

Deut 32:11-12

As an eagle stirs up its nest, hovers over its young, spreading out its wings, taking them up, carrying them on its wings, so the LORD alone led him, and there was no foreign god with him.

Sometimes God will allow you to go through things that to you are crazy and that seem to be too much.

Matthew 4:1 (NLT)

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted there by the devil.

2 Corinthians 11:22-30 (NLT)

Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I. (23) Are they servants of Christ? I know I sound like a madman, but I have served him far more! I have worked harder, been put in prison more often, been whipped times without number, and faced death again and again. (24) Five different times the Jewish leaders gave me thirty-nine lashes. (25) Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked. Once I spent a whole night and a day adrift at sea. (26) I have traveled on many long journeys. I have faced danger from rivers and from robbers. I have faced danger from my own people, the Jews, as well as from the Gentiles. I have faced danger in the cities, in the deserts, and on the seas. And I have faced danger from men who claim to be believers but are not. (27) I have worked hard and long, enduring many sleepless nights. I have been hungry and thirsty and have often gone without food. I have shivered in the cold, without enough clothing to keep me warm. (28) Then, besides all this, I have the daily burden of my concern for all the churches. (29) Who is weak without my feeling that weakness? Who is led astray, and I do not burn with anger? (30) If I must boast, I would rather boast about the things that show how weak I am.

Personally, I can now look back on my life and say that *every single hard place has helped me grow.*

4. Respect for and submission to spiritual leaders

Who is your pastor?

Do you stay in a church long enough to disagree??

The average American stays in a church now less than two years.

And we have a problem with the internet church. There is simply no way you can be a healthy believer doing spiritual life without a serious connection with a local church!

It is a sign of maturity to be willing to yield your will to those God places in positions of leadership.

And it is a bigger deal to be willing to flow with a leader when you don't see eye to eye with them on some things...

1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 (NLT)

Dear brothers and sisters, honor those who are your leaders in the Lord's work. They work hard among you and give you spiritual guidance. 13 Show them great respect and wholehearted love because of their work. And live peacefully with each other.

Hebrews 13:7 (NLT)

Remember your leaders who taught you the word of God. Think of all the good that has come from their lives, and follow the example of their faith.

Hebrews 13:17 (NLT)

Obeys your spiritual leaders, and do what they say. Their work is to watch over your souls, and they are accountable to God. Give them reason to do this with joy and not with sorrow. That would certainly not be for your benefit.

In my past, God has placed me in churches where I had the opportunity to flow with the pastor and leaders, though I did not agree with nor understand why they did what they did.

Abundant life - 1992 - Back-row judging.

5. Ability to love people you don't like

Our spirituality is tied directly to our love life!

There simply is no spiritual growth without growth in love. Period.

The telltale sign of our spiritual life is how we treat others. Period.

Romans 5:5 (HCSB)

This hope will not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

1 John 3:14 (HCSB) We know that we have passed from death to life because we love our brothers. The one who does not love remains in death.

John 13:34-35 (ESV)

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. 35 By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.

Matthew 5:44-48 (NKJV)

But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, (45) that you may be sons

of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. (46) For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? (47) And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? (48) Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.

1 John 4:19-21 (NLT)

We love each other because He loved us first. (20) If someone says, "I love God," but hates a fellow believer, that person is a liar; for if we don't love people we can see, how can we love God, whom we cannot see? (21) And He has given us this command: Those who love God must also love their fellow believers.

1 Corinthians 13:4-8 (AMPC)

Love endures long and is patient and kind; love never is envious nor boils over with jealousy, is not boastful or vainglorious, does not display itself haughtily. (5) It is not conceited (arrogant and inflated with pride); it is not rude (unmannerly) and does not act unbecomingly. Love (God's love in us) does not insist on its own rights or its own way, for it is not self-seeking; it is not touchy or fretful or resentful; it takes no account of the evil done to it [it pays no attention to a suffered wrong]. (6) It does not rejoice at injustice and unrighteousness, but rejoices when right and truth prevail. (7) Love bears up under anything and everything that comes, is ever ready to believe the best of every person, its hopes are fadeless under all circumstances, and it endures everything [without weakening]. (8) Love never fails [never fades out or becomes obsolete or comes to an end].

Ask God to help you develop your love life. He will most probably start with the people you don't like :)

A person who is developed in love is: dependable, slow to judge, slow to speak, quick to hear, needs no credit, holds no grudges, totally owns his or her actions and choices, makes others feel at ease, and always believes the best of others.

Action Points:

1. Do you put spiritual things at the top of your priority list each day?
2. Do you get overly upset when criticized, or do you become prideful with accomplishment?
3. Do you choose to see God at work even in the hard places life brings?
4. Do you willingly and freely submit to spiritual leaders? Do you have a pastor?

5. Do you choose to love people you don't like, or who don't like you?